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NEW DEPARTURE

IN

Catholic Liberal Education.

BY

A CATHOLIC BARRISTER.

LONDON: BURNS AND OATES.

1878.

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THE NEW DEPARTURE

IN

CATHOLIC LIBERAL EDUCATION.

MUCH public attention has been attracted by a controversy on the subject of Catholic Liberal Education, which has for some time occupied a prominent position in the columns of the *Tablet*, and agitated the minds and pens of the many whom the subject interests. With some surprise, I have observed that the lion's share in the controversy has been taken by the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Petre. The question is to laymen, as well as to clerics, one of surpassing interest; and, differing as I do very strongly indeed from the peculiar, and not very clearly expressed, views of Mr. Petre, I not unnaturally feel anxious to take some part in the discussion. I at first intended to have confined my observations to the limits of a newspaper letter, and to have merely added another to the long list of the *Tablet* correspondents. On reflection, however, it appeared to

me that a reply to the two pamphlets* and the four long letters of Mr. Petre could not be reasonably compressed into any space the *Tablet* would be able to afford me. I therefore determined to submit to those interested a short paper on the subject.

The correspondents of the *Tablet*, though professedly dealing with the theories of Mr. Petre, appear to me to have, in many instances, slidden off the main lines of the argument—to have skirmished on the very outskirts of the subject. I shall endeavour to confine my observations in this paper, as far as may be, to the questions directly raised by the pamphlets and letters of the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Petre.

Let me, however, premise that I will deal with those questions entirely on their merits. I have made anxious inquiries in various directions, but have nowhere been able to discover anything that would give to Mr. Petre any authority, personal or official, to lay down the law on the subject of education. Every man is, of course, entitled to be heard who speaks sound sense upon an interesting question; nor should we lightly differ from the views of one who had previously proved himself conversant with the subject of which he treats. But Mr. Petre has established no such claim. He cannot profess to speak on the subject of education with any higher authority than that which he derives from

* *Remarks on the Present Condition of Catholic Liberal Education*, by the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Petre; and the *Problem of Catholic Education*, by the Author of *Remarks on the Present Condition of Catholic Liberal Education*. (London: Burns & Oates, 1877.)

the honourable and reverend prefixes to his name, and I shall treat his views with all the deference to which those prefixes entitle him, but with no more.

Even Mr. Petre's admirers must admit that his style is somewhat vague; but, as far as I am able to gather his meaning from his words, he would seem to enunciate three general propositions: That the non-Catholic educational system ought to be admired; that the Catholic system must be condemned; and that the grand realisation of ideal perfection is to be found in the system to be observed in the new college at Woburn Park, as 'shadowed forth' (the phrase is borrowed from a *Tablet* correspondent, and is appropriate) in the pamphlets of its Hon. and Rev. founder.

The first of these propositions may be very lightly dealt with here. Mr. Petre is loud in his praise of the non-Catholic public-school system, but no statement is made, far less proof given, of any special excellence which that system possesses. Indeed, if Mr. Petre were only logical, the system should meet at his hands with censure instead of praise. He condemns the cultivation of athletics: nowhere, admittedly, are athletics more warmly encouraged or more vehemently pursued than in Protestant public schools. He condemns, and in this instance most rightly condemns, all rough treatment, all wanton severity, especially in dealing with the weak and young: he surely has never heard of 'buck-horsing,' 'tunding,' 'tanning-in way,' practices common in Protestant public schools, but of which even the names are so strange in

Catholic ears that I must refer my Catholic readers for further information in regard to those systems of wanton and irresponsible barbarity to the pages of the Report of the Public School Commission presented to Parliament in 1864.

In the matter of scholarship, in which Mr. Petre claims preëminence for English Protestant schools, he accounts for Catholic deficiencies as follows:

‘Nine or ten hours a day, spent mainly in storing our minds with hard facts and contracted modes of thought, with alternations of “recreation,” at present almost unavoidably regulated according to a *savage ideal* of excellence, and for which the undeniable necessity of physical exercise to youth is the ever-ready excuse, affords hardly due measure of opportunity to sensitive and truly studious minds. Such minds are *very usually found in physical frames* unfit to face, without daily loss, the rude change of standard which the life of the hitherto model schoolboy undergoes on its passage from the protection and discipline of the schoolroom to the barbarous ideal upheld on the football-ground, where the particular form of muscular exertion arranged for the season is compulsory, and where hard heads, thick limbs, and rude sensibilities carry all before them.’*

But he entirely ignores the facts, that in few Catholic, and in all Protestant, schools† the system of compulsory recreation prevails, and in the Protestant schools the manner of recreation is almost invariably more rough and unrestrained.

Nor, in truth, have our schools in matters intellectual reason to fear competition with the schools of other creeds. In another place I shall endeavour to demonstrate that the idea of non-Catholic

* *Remarks on the Present Condition of Catholic Liberal Education*, p. 11.

† Report of Public School Commission presented to Parliament in 1874.

superiority entertained by Mr. Petre, and by men far abler and wiser than Mr. Petre, is a mere creation of their own fancy. There is absolutely no field in which the educated Catholic, educated under the existing system, need fear to meet his Protestant compeer, if only external disadvantages were removed. Well may Mr. Petre ask, 'Why are we continually, in what seems' (and I would add, what is) 'a spirit of persistent snobbishness, glorifying the completeness and scholarship, the social polish, of the Eton or the Harrow boy, compromising the credit of our religion by an acknowledgment that, for all our spiritual advantage, our moral and doctrinal organisation, we are not as they?''* Why, indeed, unless because we are determined still to wear the 'prison dress' after our full freedom is attained; unless we are resolved, by the absence of self-respect, to forfeit the respect of others, and to perpetuate that prejudice that in Protestant England would rob Catholics of all social, intellectual, or political advancement. I do not think it necessary to dwell longer here on the question of the alleged non-Catholic superiority, more especially as Mr. Petre in his letters to the *Tablet* appears to have receded from the very advanced position he originally occupied on this subject.

With the second and not less important branch of the discussion I purpose now to deal. Mr. Petre is not content with lauding the non-Catholic, he decries the Catholic system, and he brings grave and compromising charges against the gifted and

* *Remarks*, &c. p. 20.

devoted men to whose care the education of Catholic England is mainly intrusted.

I believe I am not mistaken in supposing that those charges are mainly levelled against the Jesuits. In the opening pages of his pamphlet, the *Problem of Catholic Liberal Education*, Mr. Petre virtually admits that this is so. It is no palliation of those accusations that they are made with a vagueness which with Mr. Petre appears almost constitutional. It would be well indeed if he realised the fact that there is no delicacy in using language definite enough to be understood, but too indefinite to be answered. There is frankness in plain speaking, there is delicacy in silence; but there is neither frankness nor delicacy in the adoption of the middle course, so witheringly stigmatised by Pope in the most caustic bit of sarcastic poetry in the language :

‘Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike;
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike.’

Yet it is some such course as this that Mr. Petre—quite unconsciously, I am sure—has thought proper to adopt. In the 4th page of his first pamphlet he says :

‘And so the battle rages, the more fiercely that Catholic educational interests are conflicting and closely packed, and not so ethereally pure as that they should be free from the disturbance arising wherever commercial success becomes mixed among motives essentially beyond and above it.’

Again, in the 20th page of the same pamphlet he observes :

‘ Why all this, and more? Because the old days are passed away ; because it is now inevitable that we should subject even asceticism and piety to intelligent, albeit ever-reverent, criticism ; because many of our old “ traditions ” are “ comfortable, self-satisfied, mediocre, unambitious ; ” and because antagonistic interests are commercial and too closely packed ; and because “ *conscience* doth make cowards of us all.” ’

His letters to the *Tablet* are full of disparaging allusions to the training for the London matriculation examination, as a ‘ prospective advertisement ’ for the colleges in which the students are so trained. Now what does all this mean? Truly it might be said to Mr. Petre :

‘ You breathe an accusation vast and vague :
If aught you know set up the charge you know,
To stand or fall.’

He must forgive me, then, if I try to put his charge in plain English and to answer it in plain English. If those strange insinuations of Mr. Petre about closely-packed commercial interests have a meaning at all, they must mean that the earnest and devoted men who have given their lives to the work of education are ready to sacrifice the high and holy duties they have undertaken to the ‘ commercial,’ or, plainer still, pecuniary, interests of these colleges and of themselves. Put thus plainly the charge bears its refutation on its face. The Jesuits—in whose order, rumour has it, Mr. Petre was himself once anxious to be enrolled—have not, and cannot have, commercial or pecuniary interests in any one sense in which the words are used. Their vow of perpetual poverty frees them at once and for ever from

every degrading temptation of the kind, and enables them to follow without let or hindrance the ideal of perfection in the noble work to which their self-sacrificing order is devoted. I am quite sure that the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Petre will be the first to own the truth of all this; will be the first to repudiate the logical deduction from his own words. Indeed, if I remember rightly, in one of his letters to the *Tablet* he complains bitterly that 'his positions are pushed to their utmost logical consequences,' and describes such a course of procedure as '*summa injuria*.' But he ought to remember that such charges as his own language thus imports should not be lightly made. How bitterly would he resent it if he were himself similarly attacked—if, for instance, it were insinuated (God forbid that I should make the insinuation) that all his lately displayed zeal for Catholic education was inspired by an interested motive, that the establishment of the new college at Woburn Park was attributable to the same cause, and that his two singular pamphlets were but a commercial advertisement to a commercial speculation.

But the charge of interested motives is not the only or even the most serious charge that Mr. Petre has brought against the Jesuits. He charges them point-blank in his pamphlets and in his letters with the practice of a disgraceful system of espionage. This charge lurks in many a vague passage in both his pamphlets; but it is only in his letter to the *Tablet* of the 29th of December 1877 that, encouraged by the countenance of 'An old Eton and

Christchurch Man,' he ventures to give body and substance to his accusation. In that letter he says :

'Your correspondent ("An old Eton and Christchurch Man") in his last letter (Dec. 22) speaks in very strong language of what he designates "espionage." He says, speaking of the shortcomings of Catholic education, that "the fault does not lie with the material, but with those that shape it." Now that statement of his is of a nature which has lately been stigmatised as "attack." "An old Eton and Christchurch Man" is presumably a man of position; he is probably not guilty of the unpardonable sin of being a *young* man; he has, without doubt, put his thoughts into print in the full maturity of his judgment and in the full courage of his convictions. Humbly, therefore, under shadow of his shield, I here venture to express my firm belief that he has touched the root of the matter.

After long reflection and observation, conducted during an experience of a very exceptional nature, I have formed the deliberate conclusion that espionage and mistrust, wherever they exist, and in proportion to their presence, lie at the source of all that Catholics regret in educational result. What is now beginning to be regarded as over-strictness—or rather as a mistaken form of strictness—has for years past been the very bane of our Catholic training. Neither its practice nor its results will admit of close examination.'

He adds :

'It is paradoxical to say that we wish our young men to be "*English gentlemen, strangers to no culture which is bestowed on their Protestant fellow-countrymen,*" if, as "An old Eton and Christchurch Man" says, "*the noblest of all animals, the British boy, can be trained no otherwise than under a system of espionage barely tolerable in France or Italy.*" Your correspondent must stand by his words. He has spoken more plainly than I dared speak. Perhaps he is older and more mature than I, therefore hear him; I am now but a witness in his case.'

Now, as 'An old Jesuit College Man,' I may be allowed to join issue directly with 'An old Eton and Christchurch Man' and with Mr. Petre on this

point. I can, of course, speak only from my own experience, but the Jesuit educational system is noted for its uniformity. I must be pardoned if I speak warmly; for I feel deeply upon this subject. Five years—five of the very happiest years of my life—were spent beneath the shelter of the Jesuits' roof. To them and to their care I owe every good thing, moral or intellectual, that I may happen to possess; and I should feel myself guilty of the basest ingratitude if I stood silently by while their character or their system was assailed. Most willingly and most truthfully, then, do I give my testimony that in the Jesuit college where I, with nearly two hundred other boys, spent the best days of my youth espionage was a thing absolutely unknown. The fullest confidence was reposed in the honour and good feeling of the students, and rarely indeed was that confidence abused. The Jesuits were as the parents of the younger boys; as the elder brothers of the more advanced. In the study halls they were earnest erudite mentors; in the playground they were the unconstrained sharers in our sports. Mutual affection was cemented by deep respect on the one side, by frank and familiar kindness on the other. I may add that the friendships thus formed ended not with the ending of our school-days, but in many cases (mine amongst the rest) stretched far out into our after-life, and were to us a source of keen intellectual and social pleasure, and deep religious consolation. Surely I am justified in warmly protesting against a system such as I have described—and truthfully described—

being stigmatised as a 'system of espionage barely tolerable in France or Italy.'

There is just one other observation of Mr. Petre's that I would wish to notice before I pass from this branch of the subject. In the 22d page of his first pamphlet he says:

'Let boys be allowed to gratify their own taste in reading; let them *begin* by the enjoyment of romance, by the devouring *of such as* Scott's works (till recently interdicted in *all* our Catholic schools, now admitted in one or two), and let some competent and large-minded person direct, as far as he can, the taste of each to standards ever rising.'

The italics in this passage are mine; but the collocation is the author's. To the assertion that the paragraph contains I am able to give a direct contradiction. My own school-days are, I regret to say, of no very recent date; yet in the Jesuit college where I studied, in my time the reading of all the classics of English fiction was not only permitted, but warmly encouraged. In the 9th page of his first pamphlet Mr. Petre says, 'And with regard to this kind of scholar' (of the class of Leibnitz and Shakespeare), 'we may remark that he is by no means the least who has learned to evolve comprehensive results from a small stock of fact-knowledge.' Eminent indeed must be the scholarship of the Hon. and Rev. author himself, who appears to have evolved such very comprehensive results from no fact-knowledge at all.

So much for Mr. Petre's 'attack' upon the Jesuits. That body, I feel quite sure, has been but little concerned at his 'attack.' All who believe him sane

must accept his earnest 'protest against any intention of attack in the sense of a wish to *destroy*;'* must acquit him of the unspeakable vanity of believing that any censures of his could even injuriously affect that mighty and magnificent organisation that has compelled the respectful admiration of the most gifted enemies of our Church.†

I now come to the third division of the subject-matter of this paper—the educational theories of Mr. Petre. I am met by a very serious difficulty on the threshold of this department of the subject. As far as I can understand his views, I differ from them strongly; but, without any great affectation of humility, I may confess that I find it very difficult indeed to ascertain precisely what his views really are. Mr. Petre, if he will forgive the simile, seems to adopt the tactics of the cuttle-fish, and to seek protection from all attack in a self-created obscurity. It would appear that I am not the first by whom the difficulty I indicate has been experienced. From a letter of the Hon. and Rev. author's I would suppose that the reviewer of the *Tablet*, whose remarks I regret I have not had the advantage of reading, was similarly puzzled. In his letter to the *Tablet* of the 1st of December 1877 Mr. Petre says:

'I must first, then, absolutely, unreservedly, and emphatically declare that were my system such as my awkward literary efforts seem to have represented it, I should indeed merit all the hard

* *The Problem of Liberal Catholic Education*, p. 4.

† Macaulay; Ranke's *History of the Popes*.

words you, in your great zeal for Catholic truth, have spoken of it. You attack a system which clearly would be most "pernicious, radically false, mistaken, and dangerous," were it such as I, unfortunately, seem to have represented it.'

In another portion of the same communication he adds :

' Though at present my cries in the wilderness may mystify my critics, I must not die misunderstood and misrepresented ;'

and he concludes with the following singular paragraph :

' Finally, dear sir, allow me, with all respect to yourself and your zeal for Catholic progress, to suggest to my critic that before applying to me or mine the ruinous epithets of "pernicious, dangerous, and radically false," it might be well to be clear of confusion and "mystification." It matters little that my "crude" efforts may have contributed to that confusion. Nothing is more utterly fatal to a Catholic than any imputation on the soundness of his teaching. Evidence must be heard *to the utmost* before sentences of death are passed.'

Now I really cannot concur in the statement that 'it matters little' if the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Petre's efforts have contributed to such confusion as is here indicated. We must remember that he has volunteered his opinions on the subject of education. On so important and so delicate a subject, who cannot write clearly should not write at all; and the Hon. and Rev. author, who stands self-accused of incapacity to express his views in an intelligible way, should have hesitated long before he gave to the world, on the authority of a Catholic priest, doctrines which an educated and intelligent man, as the *Tablet* reviewer pre-

sumably is, may reasonably construe as 'pernicious,' 'radically false, mistaken, and dangerous.'

Surely the frank confession of literary incompetency contained in those quotations from Mr. Petre's letter is somewhat incongruous, as made by one who possesses so high an idea of the importance of 'English composition,' judging from his observations in the 16th page of his *Remarks on the Present Condition of Catholic Liberal Education*. The following is the passage :

'And now to turn to the second category. We Catholics are deficient in regard of "composition." This singularly weak and inadequate term has come to mean every kind of literary effort—English essay-writing, Latin or Greek prose or verse. The literary art has been degraded to a mere practice in theme-writing, to the acquisition of a mere grammatical and orthographic dexterity; and this being so, our managers of schools are astonished that our boys are backward in "composition."

As if success in the production of literature—the art by which, as Vinet puts it, "Man reveals himself *synthetically* to man," the art of rhetoric spoken and written—could by any possibility be other than the fullest and most searching test to which man's individual completeness, his *scholarship*, could be brought. As if it were possible that a body of men intellectually and socially organised as are Catholics, *but characterised by constant failure in the evolution of the power to recognise and express their thoughts, could be taken otherwise than as victims to a deep-seated vitiation of their intellectual economies*. As if it were reasonable to expect other than superficial, diffuse, imbecile, and inaccurate effort from minds filled with a merely philological view of literature, dry disconnected facts of physical science confined within channels of thought formed on mere mathematics, *and whose social and æsthetic ideal has been modelled in the turmoil of a society where confessedly all classes are mixed, where the conflicting crudities are ever at work of juvenile minds, to many of whom beautiful and gentle surroundings—the peace of an elegant and cultivated home—have been, and are to be, unknown.*'

I have ventured in this long quotation to make use of a favourite device of Mr. Petre's—the device of italics; and I think it is plain from the passages I have italicised that he was fortunate enough to escape from the action of the system he condemns, that he at least was never degraded by the acquisition of a ‘mere grammatical dexterity.’ The whole passage reads like a burlesque of Dr. Johnson, but without the grammatical correctness or the logical clearness for which the doctor was so eminently distinguished. In all seriousness I would ask, Is a writer like this entitled to speak with dogmatic authority to men of proved ability and learning on the subject of English literature?

This is no merely isolated passage. It is a fair, perhaps a favourable, sample of Mr. Petre's literary style. Obscurity is not accidental, but essential, to his writing. He is peculiarly fond of the unscientific use of scientific language. He ‘mystifies his critics,’ it may be shrewdly suspected, because he is mystified himself. He sends big words out at random in search of thoughts which they appear seldom indeed to find. Lest I should be accused of judging harshly or hastily, I venture to make one or two further extracts, almost at random, from his writings, exercising a little freedom in the employment of italics. He says in his first pamphlet, and he quotes in his second, the following:

‘The literary character is the complete product of liberal education, and “the evolution of a literary faculty implies some knowledge, and, *ceteris paribus*, the more the better, much of the sympathy of maturer minds, much encouragement, and gentle

forbearance. Its formation extends through many stages of gradually centring, but for the time being, *illusiv*e speculation." *Leisure*, not idleness and sloth, be it understood, but a well-directed leisure, is its first necessity. *The peace and quiet of a cultivated retirement, and not the cultivation of savage ideals, are the scenes* and circumstances among which the greatest minds have been reared.'

No one, I believe, will feel inclined to dispute the fact that the evolution of a literary faculty implies *some* knowledge; indeed most people would have considered the statement a somewhat palpable truism; but what are the *cætera* to which Mr. Petre alludes, and how can the peace and quiet of a cultivated retirement, or the 'cultivation of savage ideals' (whatever that may mean), be in any sense regarded as 'scenes'?

Again, who can divine the meaning of the following, which precedes the last quoted passage on the same page?*

'We are writing in the interests of liberal education, not of professional or special education. Liberal education, of its very nature, must ever imply the nearest approach to *educational ideal* possible for the time being. Professional education, in the very import of the term, implies a limit of extension which threatens a familiar logical fallacy to any one who may make careless use of terms.'

Surely the author has here exposed himself to the vengeance of the familiar logical fallacy of which he speaks. Again I protest against any accusation of unfair selection in the passages I have quoted. Again I assert they are fair specimens of his ordinary writing. Indeed, other passages in his pamphlets that appeared to me still more unintel-

* *The Problem of Catholic Liberal Education*, page 22.

ligible, I have refrained from repeating here, on account of the serious gravity of the topics with which they dealt. I am very willing that this criticism of his style should be submitted to the test of a perusal of all that he has written; or, if that be considered an impracticable ordeal, to the test of a careful consideration of any of the passages that I have quoted, or will quote for any purpose in this paper. On the subject of literary cultivation, Mr. Petre speaks with a certain assumption of authority. In the 20th page of his first pamphlet he says:

‘The writer of this paper has, by positive experience, extending, in different degrees, over some years, discovered the almost amazing influence in point of literary cultivation of a mere active disposition to encourage some wider ambition than that offered by the London University Matriculation Examination. It has been his privilege to be permitted to furnish and supervise, according to his own conception, literary opportunities to one of our most flourishing and rising Catholic schools. The combined results of his efforts *is* well displayed in the fact that, with four hours a week allowed for essay-writing, and with what of voluntary work the enthusiasm of the student might contribute, he has elicited from boys as young as twelve and thirteen careful and completed original romances extending over a hundred and odd pages of closely written exercise-paper.’

The matter and manner of his pamphlets would almost suggest the idea that they were compiled from some of the ‘odd pages of closely written exercise-paper’ of which he speaks.

I have been, perhaps tediously, minute in my observations on the literary style of Mr. Petre; but I was influenced by two motives to the course I have adopted. In his second pamphlet he promises that he will ‘issue shortly an outline of a system

of teaching English composition and essay-writing, and that such system will be identical with one he has successfully tested ; and I thought it well that the public should clearly understand beforehand with how much authority he is entitled to speak upon this subject. In the second place, Mr. Petre is very plaintive on the subject of misrepresentation ; and I was naturally anxious to show that, if in this paper I have mistaken his views, the fault was not mine, but his.

It seems to me, however, that I can distinguish in his pamphlets two or three very false doctrines looming dangerously through the thick mist of Mr. Petre's style, and with these doctrines I shall now proceed to deal.

Mr. Petre is, especially on his first appearance in print, very loud in his denunciations of what he considers the over-encouragement of athletics in our schools. His doctrine appears to be, as far as it can be gathered from his words, that boys should be allowed sufficient exercise to keep them in health, and no more. His views seem, indeed, to have undergone considerable modifications as the absurdity of his original proposition was forced on his mind. In one of his pet italicised phrases which he subsequently quotes with great unction, he alludes in terms of strong condemnation to '*the barbarous ideal upheld on the football-ground.*' It is not easy to guess the meaning of this phrase of which the author appears so fond. In this, as in most of his strictures, there is involved a fallacy which Bentham has vigorously exposed and condemned. '*Petitio*

principii, or begging the question,' the great juriconsult tells us, is not argument; and *petitio principii* he thus succinctly describes: 'An impassioned term envelopes a proposition, not expressed but understood, which always accompanies its employment, though in general unperceived by those who employ it. This concealed proposition implies either blame or praise, but the implication is always vague and undetermined.'* Such blame as Bentham mentions is implied in the use of the word 'barbarous.' Every one will, of course, readily admit that barbarity in any shape or form is a thing to be condemned; but surely it rests with Mr. Petre to show that the ideal of football is necessarily, or even ordinarily, barbarous. The obvious meaning of the words we have quoted appears to be that football is barbarous, and ought to be condemned; but an extract from a letter of Mr. Petre to the *Tablet* of the 1st of December shows that I have greatly mistaken, or he has materially altered, his opinions. He says:

'So far I highly advocate "roughing it." As to football, the Woburn boys have been for the last few weeks roughing it in a manner which might surprise sensitive parents. But I should be a poor schoolmaster if I did not elsewhere warn them that, however innocent, the football ideal will not be that of any learned profession or noble position; and that brains and hearts, and not legs and arms, are the instruments by which success is secured in this life and the next.

My boys shall never want for football, cricket, boating, bathing, or athletics of any kind; and I can but regret my own fast-diminishing power to join with them on fields where I was once myself not unknown.'

* Bentham's *Theory of Legislation*.

Can Mr. Petre really believe in the necessity of the solemn warning on which he here lays such stress? Does he really imagine that any fairly intelligent boy dreams for a moment 'that the football ideal will be that of any learned profession;' that success in this life and the next is to be secured by legs and arms—that, in fine, all the world's a goal, and all the men and women merely footballs?

In this matter Mr. Petre certainly has made some concessions to the force of public opinion, but he has not definitely abandoned his doctrine on the subject. That doctrine is indicated in various portions of his pamphlets, and is laid down much more distinctly than is his wont in the 13th page of his *Problem of Catholic Liberal Education*. He says there :

'No man gifted with a sound brain is justified in giving a greater importance to physical education than is implied in the observance of such principles as may keep his body in health and make it a fitting instrument of the mind.'

Now I for one would offer my humble protest against this doctrine; and still more strongly would I protest against his statement that, 'at the period when muscle is strongest, the natural tastes, ideals, aspirations of the individual man are rather of the brutal kind, exhibiting themselves in a grossly physical standard of excellence.'* He persistently sneers at pluck and bottom, which words, he says, 'with other delicate and dignified terms, were fur-

* *Remarks on the Present Condition*, &c. page 16.

nished him by the leading Catholic journal' (presumably the *Tablet*). It may be noticed that the Hon. and Rev. author could find no better words to express his own meaning, albeit with the protest of inverted commas, in the 6th page of the very pamphlet in which he so strongly condemns their use. In very truth, 'pluck' and 'bottom' are good honest words for good honest qualities: translated into the aristocratic dialect of Mr. Petre, they mean courage and endurance, and they are engendered mainly by the physical training which Mr. Petre so strenuously condemns. The body, like the mind, requires education. It is *not* a mere dead box in which the soul is shut, and which it is only necessary to keep in tolerable repair. It acts and reacts upon the soul, and strongly influences our moral nature. Honour, truth, and gentleness are the virtues of the strong; meanness, falsehood, and cruelty but too often the vices of the weak. Nor is the training necessary for athletic excellence without its moral advantages. Truly the old Latin poet and moralist has told us:

'Qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam
Multa tulit fecitque puer, sudavit et alsit,
Abstinnit Venere et vino.'

We should not be too hard even on the excesses of a system in which perseverance, endurance, and self-restraint are the essentials of success.

But is it true that the promotion of athletics has a tendency to produce a grossness and brutality of disposition? Let us look to that period in the

world's history when manly accomplishments were regarded with a reverence that was almost a superstition—the days when chivalry was at its prime in Europe. Do we not find that period eminently characterised by delicate refinement and exalted enthusiasm? Do we not find in those days that the strongest and bravest were the most tender and the most truthful—that the keenest lance was quickest couched when justice called for aid—the broadest shield was soonest raised to shelter the afflicted?

Mr. Petre concludes his remarks upon this subject with the following characteristic summary :

‘Men of genius never *have*, and never will *be*, famous as athletes. Saints have ever regarded the fallen nature of the body with suspicion. The days of Sparta have passed away. Lycurgus is no more. Let muscular Christianity, the hardening theory, “pluck and bottom,” perish with *them*; and so let “Axminster carpets,” and “aristocratic luxury,” and “high-born snobs,” and all other ridiculous and unworthy clap-trap which would come in the way of Catholic progress.’*

Again I am responsible for the italics and Mr. Petre for the grammar. The paragraph is not particularly elegant or lucid; but is it true? With the prophecy it contains I cannot pretend to deal. But can it be seriously asserted that men of genius have never *been* famous as athletes? I will not remind Mr. Petre that Socrates gained the prize for warlike prowess amongst the Athenians—I will not refer to the trite instance of the ‘Admirable Crichton;’ for even in our own day and in our own

* *The Problem*, &c. page 34.

country a complete refutation of his proposition can be found. Byron, the greatest of our modern poets, was as proud of his swimming as of his poetry; Wellington, the greatest of modern generals, was the hardest rider in the hunting-field; and Gladstone, the greatest of modern statesmen and scholars, spends the hours stolen from political toil or classical contemplation in the athletic exercise of a woodman.

After athletics, the Rev. Mr. Petre's indignation seems to be directed mainly against examinations; more especially competitive examinations, and most especially the form of competitive examination in vogue in the London University. This feeling so completely underlies his two pamphlets that it is almost a work of supererogation to quote particular passages in which it is displayed.

'Reflective boys,' he tells us, 'are not *generally* those who are distinguished at athletic exercises, or fond of the hurry of preparation for competitive examinations. We ourselves have known many boys who have achieved high success in gaining prizes at school, who have been made much of by their masters, and whose academic success has been freely used to the advantage of the seminaries in which they have been educated, but who are destitute of conversational power, incapable of effort in discursive thought.'*

Again he remarks :

'Nothing is of more ordinary occurrence than to meet with men who have been highly distinguished at school or college, who have emerged covered with honour from competitive examinations, and yet who are still unknown, whose influence is not felt by their fellow-men, whose conversation is distinguished by fallacious reasoning, by crude conception, and by incompleteness of mental grasp.'†

* *The Problem*, &c. p. 19.

† *Remarks*, &c.

His letters to the *Tablet* are full of similar observations; and the general deduction he draws would appear to be that examinations have no place in a perfect system of education. It would be simply absurd to attempt to argue against a proposition like this. It would be mere presumption on my part to enter on a defence of the system, of which the merits are recognised by the consent and practice of every country in Europe. It is the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Petre against the world on this important point. Examination is not an infallible, but it is a very reliable, test of intellectual attainments; and, what is more important still, it is the only test which is capable of general application. In the current number of the *Westminster Review*, very eloquent testimony is borne to the beneficial effect of University examination in elevating the standard of female education in this country. It would certainly appear quite plain that competitive examination—or, in other words, that form of examination in which relative degrees of merit are recognised—is the best. Frequent examinations have, indeed, a most beneficial effect on a school system. By honest emulation they encourage the student to application; by constant practice they train him to the quick recognition and exertion of the powers of his mind. A mere accumulation of dry facts in the memory is never sufficient to secure success, even in the meanest examination.

Just a word or two about the London University system, with which Mr. Petre is so wroth. As he brings no direct charges against that system, it is very

hard to make a definite defence; but of one thing I can inform him on my own experience, that he is mistaken if he imagines that the memory is the only faculty exercised in its examinations. A single glance at the examination-papers will show that much close reasoning and not a little original thought is necessary to answer correctly the questions they contain. In good truth Mr. Petre himself does not appear to realise very clearly the grounds of his animosity to the London University system. His reasons, as he conceives them, are stated in the following vague paragraph in a letter to the *Tablet*:

‘My own objection to the London University course is briefly this: London has lent its powerful influence to the support of the position. 1. That *positive results and competitive examinations* are to be preferred to *general culture and individual development*. 2. That in the enormous preponderance it gives to mathematics it ignores the literary faculty. 3. That the preparation for its examinations entails too severe a strain upon the young and forming mind. Finally, that, at the sacrifice of individuals, the London University affords a means of advertisement, of external “*publicity*,” which, in the heat of the competition and “disunion” admitted to exist, may easily tempt our educators out of the noblest paths.’

But what argument does Mr. Petre give us to show that ‘positive results’ are in the remotest degree incompatible with general culture, or that individual development is not largely aided by competitive examination? Of his views on the subject of mathematics I shall have a word to say later on. Of the third reason he alleges, it may be said that the individual professor must always

estimate the powers of the individual student; and of his final objection, that it is of no force until the evil of the London University system is first proved. For if the Matriculation examination be a good thing, it is manifestly well that students should be trained for that examination, and the public should be informed when that test of scholarship had been most successfully applied.

Hitherto I have dealt solely with systems which Mr. Petre condemns. Let me now say a few words about the system of which he approves, and which he would establish. Let me premise that Mr. Petre's views have at least the merit of undeniable originality. In a letter to the *Tablet* of the 1st of December 1877 he asserts that 'he looks to no existing public school for an educational ideal;' and no one that has read his pamphlets will question the accuracy of the assertion. If I understand him rightly, he would be anxious to substitute for the 'hurry of competitive examinations' a vague something which he calls 'an educational atmosphere.' What he means by an educational atmosphere we can but surmise from various expressions in both his pamphlets.

But from quotations I have already made, and from a few further passages which I will cite, a fair guess at his meaning may be made. In one passage already cited, he says: 'Let boys be allowed to gratify their own taste in reading. *Let them begin* by the enjoyment of romance.' Again he tells us that 'the literary character is the complete product of liberal education, and the evolution of a literary

faculty implies some knowledge, and, *ceteris paribus*, the more the better, much of the sympathy of maturer minds, much encouragement, and gentle forbearance. Its formation extends through many stages of gradually centring, but for the time being illusive, speculation. Leisure, not idleness and sloth, be it understood, but a well-directed leisure, is its first necessity.' In the 11th page of his first pamphlet he thus defines scholarship :

'Scholarship, therefore, implies a habit of reflection and of intellectual assimilation; and if the term be somewhat widened, to introduce *all that can be acquired by man's æsthetic faculty*—by his power to *feel* and by his power to *observe*—it will imply, in addition to acquired knowledge and active mental process, a constantly encouraged receptivity to all that is beautiful, grand, pathetic, or sublime. To be a scholar in such a sense we must have had, over and above a *curriculum*, *leisure for reverie*, for private reading, for the action of the many selective tendencies of the mind in youth, for the semi-conscious contemplation of ideals at first dimly seen. Our youth—in as far as our future prospects will allow it—must have been passed amid circumstances of reasonable ease and elegance, and the ferocity of the craving for self-indulgence must have been anticipated in days when it can be regulated under gentle and intelligent encouragement, guidance, and restraint.'

In his subsequent paper he lays down the law after the following fashion :

'We are of opinion that, except under consideration of the *limitations incident to our circumstances of life*, which limitations are the conditions of entrance to the learned professions, or of gaining employment in civil or military service, a reflective habit of mind should be the grand prize of a liberal education.'

He warns us against the danger of hurrying a boy who gives promise of developing a reflective mind, and he thus concludes :

‘To use the words of our former pamphlet, he must have had, “over and above a *curriculum*, leisure for reverie, for private reading, for the action of the many selective tendencies of the mind in youth, for the semi-conscious contemplation of ideals at first dimly seen.”

To apply our terminology, he must have been allowed time and opportunity to take in impressions of beauty and grace by *perception*, for the flight of *fancy* in the discovery and preservation of the more delicate products of perceptive habit; for the action of *imagination* in forming ideals of all that is great and noble in the universe.’

Now all this is ‘very midsummer madness.’ Mr. Petre is not clear—he never is—but there seems to me to be enough of palpable absurdity on the face of those theories to constitute them their own refutation. What he means by ‘the many stages of gradually centring, but for the time being illusive, speculation,’ or by ‘the semi-conscious contemplation of ideals at first dimly seen,’ I confess myself totally unable to understand. But does any practical man doubt that if a boy’s education begins with the reading of romance, it will end there? Does any practical man believe that leisure is the first necessity of education? Does any one, except the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Petre, imagine that the average English boy, ‘the noblest of all *animals*’—who is described in a recent number of the *Spectator* as a being that lives much in the open air and hates books—would spend the leisure that Mr. Petre’s system allows in the ‘semi-conscious contemplation of ideals,’ of which Mr. Petre so strongly approves? Such a system, if applied, could produce none but the most pernicious results. The stronger minds thus allowed to lie fallow would be overrun

with the weeds of the many vices that idleness ever engenders; the weaker minds would be simply barren, in the absence of cultivation. The best specimens that such a system could produce would be silly and impracticable *dilettanti*, destitute of the Englishman's strong idea of duty, full of strange fads and fancies, and taught to consider themselves geniuses because they found themselves incapable of any sustained or practical exertion.

I feel I ought to apologise for dealing seriously with such theories as these, and I will endeavour to make all the *amende* in my power by the brevity of my allusions to the other educational doctrines of Mr. Petre.

Of his views on physical education I have already said sufficient; of the accusations brought against him from many quarters—that the principles he inculcates tend to encourage quasi-aristocratic snobishness and effeminate luxury—I shall say nothing, as Mr. Petre has repudiated all such intentions; but his peculiar theories on intellectual education demand at least a passing comment. He introduces his views with five or six pages of misty metaphysics, of which a faint idea may be formed from the specimens I have given of his style in dealing with subjects less abstruse. The following is a fair sample:

‘We may regard every individual human being as composed of three elements—BODY, MIND, and SOUL. When a man is first brought into the world, body and mind are in an imperfect state; imperfect as regards their own special functions, and imperfect as the instrument of the soul.

But immediately on birth a course of *development* commences, the condition of which nature has in part provided; and the human infant, if baptised, obedient to the natural law, and supplied with are called the bare necessities of life, would in course of years reach the highest expression of which its conditions permitted; after which a state of decline would supervene, which would terminate in death, the body returning to dust, the soul receiving reward or punishment, according as its will had been regulated in harmony with its spiritual advantages.

Such a state of things, such a limitation of possibilities, is the punishment of original sin.

But what is done by nature is but a small part of what is *possible* with regard to the human body and mind. What is done by baptism is but a portion of what is attainable by the human soul.'

Warned by Mr. Petre's fate of the danger of dealing with matters which I am totally incapable of comprehending, I will let his metaphysics alone, and confine my observations to his views on the subject of a curriculum in intellectual education.

Of mathematics he is condescendingly tolerant, but nothing more. He tells us:

'Mathematical study, as part of a liberal education, is valuable mainly—and thus it is very valuable—as a ready and easily applied means of mental drill in habits of attention. If pursued as an end in itself, we confess we can but promise its votary the life of an intellectual Selkirk. He may be monarch of all he surveys, but his territory will, we fear, be cold, desert, and barren. His indulgence in the pleasures of absolute monarchy may render his company unwelcome when he condescends to revisit these glimpses of the moon.

Let us not wish him a sadder fate.'*

It is not probable that the votary of higher mathematics will be much encouraged or disheartened

* *Problem*, &c. page 25.

by the promises of Mr. Petre, of whose acquaintance with the subject the public has no means of forming an opinion. Professor Tait is, however, entitled to speak with some authority on the subject; and I would wish—‘*si licet magnis componere parva*’—to compare his views with those of Mr. Petre. In his lecture on the teaching of natural philosophy, in the January number of the *Contemporary Review*, Professor Tait says :

‘As I have already said, in this elementary class, you will require very little mathematical knowledge, *but such knowledge is in itself one of those wholly good things of which no one can ever have too much.* And, moreover, it is one of the few things which it is not very easy to teach badly. A really good student will learn mathematics *in spite of* the badness of his teaching. No pompous generalities can gloss over an incorrect demonstration; at least in the eyes of any one competent to understand a correct one. Can it be on this account that there are so many more aspirants to the teaching of physics than to that of the higher mathematics? If so, it is a very serious matter for the progress of science in this country; as bad, at least, as was the case in those old days when it was supposed that a man who had notoriously failed in everything else must have been designed by nature for the vocation of schoolmaster; a truly wonderful application of teleology.

But even this queer kind of Dominie was not so strange a monstrosity as the modern manikins of *paper science*, who are always thrusting their crude notions on the world; the anatomists who have never dissected, the astronomers who have never used a telescope, or the geologists who have never carried a hammer! The old metaphysical pretenders to science had at least some small excuse for their conduct in the fact that true science was all but unknown in the days when *they* chiefly flourished, and when their *à priori* dogmatism was too generally looked upon as science. But that singular race is now well-nigh extinct, and in their place have come the paper-scientists (the barbarous word suits them exactly)—those who, with a strange mixture of half-apprehended

fact and thoroughly appreciated nonsense, pour out continuous floods of information of the most self-contradictory character. This species may be compared to midges, perhaps occasionally to mosquitos, continually pestering men of science to an extent altogether disproportionate to its own importance in the scale of being. Now and then it buzzes shrilly enough to attract the attention of the great sound-hearted, but unreasoning because non-scientific, public, which, when it *does* interfere with scientific matters, can hardly fail to make a mess of them.'

The importance and singular appropriateness of the quotation must excuse its length.

As might have been anticipated from the remarks of Professor Tait, natural science is to occupy a prominent place in the model curriculum described in the pamphlets. At page 26 of the *Problem of Catholic Liberal Education* we are asked,

'What knowledge is most worthy to be acquired?' and we are told, 'This is a question which has been and will long be variously answered. For ourselves we own that, in point of *positive* knowledge, we believe there can be no doubt as to the ultimate decision of educators in favour of natural science. *Beginning* with biology and physiology, which we believe to be the highest and most useful departments of science, we would in the course of a liberal education leave no province unexplored, *down to* that which contains the simplest problems of mechanics.'

Truly the boy who *begins* his educational career at Woburn Park, Weybridge, with the enjoyment of romance and the study of biology is fairly entitled to 'much of the sympathy of maturer minds.'

Mr. Petre's views on classics are stated briefly, but not clearly, in the 30th page of the *Problem*: 'We have no fear *that as yet* classical studies, in some form or other, *will* suffer neglect at our schools. Therefore we will save time and *tired faculties* in contemplating them in their position of security.'

He objects very strongly, as he might be expected to object, to the 'laboured analytical' study of the classic languages, and the 'minute philological attention to grammar and syntax.'

It would be an insult to the intelligence of any reader who has honoured these pages with his attention to attempt to enter into any detailed discussion of Mr. Petre's views on the subject of English literature; but it is impossible to refrain from quoting the announcement which appears in the 32d page of the *Problem* of his purposed contribution to the stock of the world's knowledge on the subject:

'We hope to issue shortly an outline of a system of teaching English composition and essay-writing; and of the evolution of a literary taste. Such a system will be identical with one we have successfully tested, *and which* has taught us the secret of the "amazing influence," and the "careful and completed romances," and the "position of unusual confidence," and the honest enthusiasm of "boys as young as twelve and thirteen."'

There can be no doubt that the publication of this 'outline' will be anxiously awaited by the literary world.

Just a word or two on what Mr. Petre calls 'the method which our education is to engender;' adding, 'to many Catholics of our acquaintance this question of method seems always to suggest "a hollow burst of bellowing, *like bulls*."'

It might be suggested as a matter of taste that a puerile, and not altogether reverent, pun is hardly a fitting prelude for the discussion of a subject of the gravest importance. But, to pass from that, he continues:

‘ We speak of modes of speculation and research, the mode by which, among others secondary, our reflection on materials of secular knowledge is to be delivered from the evils of reverie and castle-building. Are we to begin by observation, verifying each observation before proceeding to generalisation? Are we to indulge in hypothesis? And if so, how far is it from hypothesis to heresy? Are we, in short, to cultivate the inductive habit, the method now so much advocated by men of science—or, are we to take up a subjective or metaphysical attitude, and fall foul of Mr. G. H. Lewes? Are our minds to be formed in liberal education to the adoption of the methods of Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Hegel, or Spencer? When doctors differ who shall decide? The question is one which is but remotely connected with school-life. It belongs rather to university education, which some day we may be venturesome enough to touch. We may, therefore, at present hold ourselves excused from any intimate treatment of the subject, and will confine ourselves to a few hints within the bounds of our remote relation thereto.’

Thence he plunges into a maze of puzzled speculation through which it were madness to follow him. But the drift of his arguments, as gathered from this and from other portions of his pamphlets, appears to be that we should encourage the study of the infidel philosophers in our schools. This is a subject to which, as a layman, I have much diffidence in alluding at all. But it would seem to me that every argument that can be used in favour of introducing juvenile intelligences to such writers might be used with equal force in favour of inoculating a patient with the virus of a malignant disease at the period when his frame is least able to resist its attacks. Mr. Petre himself affords us a striking illustration of the dangers of such a course.

He probably would not deem it a compliment if it were assumed that he has an intellect at least

equal to that of the average schoolboy, yet even he has not escaped the danger of dealing with matters outside the range of his intelligence. In the 35th page of the *Problem* he quotes, with all the approval that italics and capitals can bestow, a lengthy extract from Greg's *Enigmas of Life*. I shall only repeat the passages of which he expresses his most marked approval: '*The loftiest culture of the intellect is not favourable either to undoubting conviction of any truth or to unhesitating devotion to any cause. . . . Profound thought, if thoroughly honest and courageous, is deplorably apt to sap the foundations, and impair the strength, of our moral as well as of our intellectual convictions . . . in a word, the more thorough their study of the grandest subjects of human interest, the further do they get, not to, but from, certainty.*'

Surely this is not the doctrine of the Church in which Mr. Petre has attained the high honour of priesthood. Surely the Church does not hold that the loftiest culture of the intellect is unfavourable to an undoubting conviction of her truths, to an unhesitating devotion to her cause—that profound thought, if thoroughly honest and courageous, is dangerous to moral or intellectual convictions, or that the deepest study of the grandest objects of human interest is fatal to that undoubting certainty which is her proudest boast; and surely no mere plea of 'I didn't mean it,' or 'I didn't understand,' can justify an educated Catholic in giving to such doctrines the sanction of his authority.

I shall not dwell longer on this point. Indeed

I feel that an apology is already due for the length to which my remarks have extended. I may be reasonably accused of 'much ado about nothing,' of breaking a butterfly upon a wheel. It may with some justice be said that complete silence, or at most the stringing together of half a dozen extracts, would be a sufficient answer to the pamphlets of Mr. Petre. But it must not be forgotten that his high social position, and the new undertaking in which he has embarked, give to his remarks an adventitious importance to which their intrinsic merit or the personal authority of their author most certainly does not entitle them. It is true indeed that in many parts of his pamphlets he poses as an educator of some experience and success. He speaks of a 'position of trust and confidence,' of 'rare opportunities of observation,' of great success in education in one of the leading and most rising Catholic colleges—St. Gregory's Benedictine College at Downside. Now all these statements must be more or less matters of opinion, and it would be well if Mr. Petre were not in those matters so entirely a judge in his own cause. It would be well if his own estimation of the importance of the position he occupied, or the success of the system he adopted, was confirmed by the testimony of the professors with whom he lived, or the students whom he taught.

Old Gregorians with whom I have discussed the subject are indeed loud in their praises of the munificence with which Mr. Petre has adorned their *alma mater*; but they seem to be unanimously

of opinion that he has strangely overrated the importance of his quasi-professorial functions, and the success that attended his teaching.

On such matters indeed Mr. Petre seems to be a self-deceiving man. He affects, for example, to speak of athletics with something of the authority derived from experience. In one of his letters to the *Tablet* he expresses his regret at being prevented, by fast-diminishing powers, from joining his boys on the field of athletics, 'where,' he modestly adds, 'he himself was once not unknown.' Many fellow-students of Mr. Petre at Downside have spoken to me upon the subject, and in allusion to his athletic powers as a boy they have invariably used the irreverent, but not inexpressive, monosyllable, '*muff*.'

I must protest, in conclusion, against even the suspicion of being actuated in the slightest degree by any feeling of personal disrespect towards the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Petre: I believe him to be well meaning and sincere; but I believe that he has strongly overrated his position and his powers—he has forgotten that to teach it is necessary to be taught, that education must be acquired before it can be imparted. I believe further that he has mistaken the windmills of his own fantasy for giant abuses. In the opening remarks of his first pamphlet he says: 'For years past, with sorrowful concentration, we have from a distance, *our spurs yet unwon*, beheld the conflict.'

What reason has he to suppose that he has even now attained the honour of intellectual knighthood? In what field of education has his prowess been re-

cognised by such a distinction? From what the world has seen of his prowess, it will be apt to consider him, not the gallant knight he would have us believe, clothed in proof of learning and armed with the weapons of logic, willing and able to encounter real abuses, but a very ordinary and not very imposing personage, astride a mischievous and ungovernable hobby.

THE END.

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